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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 000991

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/10/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KIRF](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [SOCI](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY MOSCOW CENTER LOSES ITS LEASE

REF: MOSCOW 813

Classified By: Acting Pol Minister Counselor Bob Patterson for reason 1
.4 (d).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: A representative from the Moscow branch of the Church of Scientology (COS) informed us that the lease for its center next to the Bauman State Technical University was not renewed and that the organization must vacate the premises by May 15. The COS representative said that the landlord's decision was the result of adverse publicity about the COS and pressure from the Kremlin-connected youth group Young Russia. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Moscow COS representative Natalya Alekseyeva told us April 10 that the lease for the 2,000 square meter rented space adjacent to Moscow's Bauman State Technical University which serves as the COS Center expired on March 31 and that their landlord has given the COS until May 15 to leave the premises. Alekseyeva said that the COS has begun to search for alternate space, and may ask the landlord for more time if their search is not initially successful. Alekseyeva blamed the decision not to renew the lease on recent protests against the COS by the Kremlin-spawned youth group Young Russia, whose chairman, State Duma member Maksim Mishenko, has been leading an attack on the COS (reftel). The COS has asked the Duma to investigate Mishenko's statements against it as hate speech and a possible ethics violation. Alekseyeva said that Mishenko is undeterred in his efforts against the COS, and noted that Young Russia has called for yet another protest against the COS on April 12. Alekseyeva said that Young Russia has not attacked any of the COS's 44 other centers in Russia, nor have they received similar pressure or adverse publicity.

¶3. (SBU) The COS Moscow center was originally located on Borilo Golishkin Street, but after ten years it outgrew this space and moved last year to much larger premises adjacent to the university. On March 21, several hundred students and faculty held a rally near the entrance to the university to protest the existence of the "American sect" close to the school. Guards at the building reportedly had to prevent the protesters from entering the building.

Comment

¶4. (SBU) Young Russia appears to have won this round. In response to pressures on the COS, it and other religious organizations and human rights activists have prepared a letter (not yet delivered) to Putin and President-elect Medvedev "recommending" they take actions to protect the rights of their organizations.

RUSSELL